# W(h)ither Practitioner Research?

Erica McWilliam
Queensland University of Technology

## Abstract

*The purpose of this paper is to understand better the possibilities for practitioner research as a mode of educational inquiry that is yet to be legitimated within the academy. The paper maps the current state of play, and then moves on to consider what might yet be done to optimise its potential to contribute to rigorous new thinking about educational practice. Its exploration is in three parts: first, it seeks to account for the ambivalent status of practitioner research in the larger context of the modern university; second, it moves on from this account to argue both the value and the limitations of practitioner research as a contemporary mode of knowledge production in education; and finally, it suggests ways that practitioner research might be less delimited in terms of its capacities to produce knowledge that is useful to a wider range of stakeholders.*

## Introduction

Practitioner research has become both a triumphant and a tedious theme in educational scholarship. It comes in any number of hybrid forms – local inquiry, industry-focused research, action learning, problem-based inquiry, and so on – but its predominant and most recognisable form is that of action research. To many of its advocates, practitioner research occupies a moral high ground of inquiry, a fresh and unadulterated space for engagement with educational activity free from the pomp, pretentiousness and claims to 'purity' of traditional scientific inquiry. To its critics, it continues to be a blot on the landscape of inquiry, a bastardisation of science, either pure or applied. Thus any claim it might make to parity of esteem with other 'legitimate' methods of inquiry remains both dubious and troubling – dubious because of its lack of scientific pedigree, troubling because of its challenge to the 'impracticality' of social science as practised within the academy.

Some advocates see it as 'more authentic' because of its proximity to daily work (e.g. Bruck et al. 2001). Others continue to laud it as 'more ethical', because it invites non-

academic 'outsiders' (most notably teachers) to take part in social inquiry, and/or because of its status as a key tactic in a larger politics of resistance to social and institutional oppression (see McAllister and Stockhausen 2001, also Zeichner and Noffke 2001). What often characterises arguments of this type is the claim that practitioner research has more potential to give voice to the voiceless, amplifying rather than submerging marginal populations and projects. Other 'pragmatic' arguments about its value (e.g. Anderson and Herr 1999, Sankaran et al. 2001) focus more squarely on the ways in which it is responsive to new modes of knowledge production, as an emergent scholarship that is more readily aligned with problem solving for industry and commerce. Thus, in political terms, its advocates can make very strange bedfellows, covering as they do a political continuum that ranges from socially critical teacher educators at one end of the spectrum to corporate 'knowledge managers' at the other end, with teachers and school administrators sitting at a range of points in between.

But if advocates of practitioner research make for a motley politics, the critics of practitioner research are no less diverse. They can range from the scientifically orthodox to the government policy officer and/or the cultural studies intellectual. The mainstream scientist continues to bemoan, as they have done for decades, the anti-objectivism of practitioner research as a travesty of science, in which the unqualified engage in confirming their own common sense (Hodgkinson 1957, Hitchcock and Hughes 1995). The policy advisor vents frustration at being unable to frame clear policy for larger populations because of the difficulty of extrapolating from a burgeoning number of small-scale 'me-focused' studies of educational practice. The cultural studies intellectual remains suspicious of practitioner research as a theory-free zone in which 'reflecting on practice' has little meaning beyond the enactment of a flabby new humanism. So whether viewed as sub-standard, or self-indulgent, or *sans* theory, practitioner research remains suspect for a significant number of educational stakeholders.

So what are the possibilities for practitioner research? The aim of this paper is to explore this question more closely, not for the purposes of either redeeming or damning practitioner research, but to consider what we might yet do to optimise its potential to contribute to rigorous new thinking about educational practice. The discussion focuses unapologetically on its status and acceptance within the research cultures of universities, while acknowledging that universities are by no means the only stakeholders or guardians of research 'standards' in the broad educational community. The exploration proceeds in three parts: first, it seeks to account for the ambivalent status of practitioner research in the larger context of the modern university; second, it moves on from this account to argue both the value and the limitations of practitioner research as a contemporary mode of knowledge production

in education; and finally, it suggests ways that practitioner research might be less delimited in terms of its capacities to produce knowledge that is useful to a wider range of stakeholders.

## Something old, something new

For more than seventy years, educational scholars have been arguing that educators should have the opportunity to inform their own practice through the conduct of unashamedly 'interested' research. From Buckingham's (1926) early exhortations, through Lewin's (1946) and Corey's (1953) experimental models, to the emancipatory 'Deakin view' (McTaggart 1991, Kemmis and McTaggart 1988, Carr and Kemmis 1986), the call for educators to intervene in their own practices has a substantial history, despite its apparent status as the new kid on the block. Moreover, there is little doubt that participatory models of 'self-study' have made a regular appearance in educational research for more than a decade, despite criticisms of their openness to subjectivity and relativism (McTaggart 1991, Wallace 1987).

While a seventy-year history might lay some claim to being 'a tradition', in the context of the modern university, it is a very short period indeed. With the PhD itself spanning eight hundred years, and with the origins of the modern university stretching back into the first millennium, it is understandable that a seventy-year-old tradition might well be viewed as less than established. Nevertheless, it needs to be remembered that contemporary disciplines such as psychology and sociology are also relative newcomers to the university, and, indeed, that the history of university scholars engaging in research is much more recent, dating from the late nineteenth century. Thus it could not be argued that recency is of itself the sticking point.

In order to locate the problem that practitioner research has in claiming legitimacy, it is more useful to examine the centrality of the ethos of research disinterestedness. Paul Filmer's account of, and advocacy for, the centrality of 'disinterestedness' in the modern university (Filmer 1997) is helpful here. For Filmer, the ethos of disinterestedness, that is, of 'detachment … from automatic reduction to conditions of instrumental functionality', ought to be the driving logic of research (Filmer 1997, p. 57). If, as Paul Filmer claims, the role of the modern university ought to be 'to promote disinterested research *for its own sake*' (p. 57, emphasis added), and if the point of practitioner research is to conduct research that is designed to work in *the interests of a particular group or community located in a particular time and place*, then there is clearly a clash of purposes. This is not to say that practitioner research is necessarily flawed because it is more likely to be 'biased' in terms of design. 'Bias' as pre-judgment, to use Gadamer's interpretation of that word (Gadamer, 1975), is always present in research design. The issue is one of larger purposes which are seen

(for better *and* worse) to rise above 'seeking to please'. The sort of 'disinterest' that Filmer speaks of is the detachment that has its historical roots in the pedagogy of Greek philosophers. The effectiveness of philosopher teachers like Georgias, for example, was attributed to:

> never having done anything for the sake of giving pleasure to another ... not allow[ing] himself to be deflected by anything which might injure his health ... but also refus[ing] to be troubled by other people's praise or blame or by the intervention of a fact which might disturb his thought. (Untersteiner 1954, p. 94)

The raison d'être of practitioner research is at odds with this sort of thinking, in the same way that contemporary notions of effective teaching stand in opposition to the ideal of detachment (McWilliam 1999). The very notion that one ought not to be swayed from truth, and its pursuit through systematic inquiry, by what others (students, colleagues, parents, employers) want or need is anathema to the motivation that drives both professional educators *and* practitioner research as a student-focused, needs-driven, 'bottom-up' process of professional development.

One does not have to endorse or refute Filmer's view of the role of the good/disinterested university to understand how such a view works to marginalise practitioner research. The ethos of 'interested' engagement that attaches to practitioner research means that it sits awkwardly in an academy so closely wedded to disinterest. Importantly, however, it needs to be acknowledged that 'interestedness' is not limited to 'non-academic' researchers. Practice is to practitioners as disciplines are to academics. That is, academics who engage in research are as 'interested' in being informed by, and making a significant contribution to, their disciplinary knowledge as practitioners are in being informed by and making a significant contribution to their professional knowledge. What differentiates these two researcher populations is that disciplinary 'interestedness' is legitimated within the traditions of the academy while practitioner 'interestedness' is yet to achieve legitimation.

## Strengths and limitations

'Disinterested research for its own sake' is not the only hallmark of the good university, according to Filmer (1997, p. 57). He also argues that taking 'a critical stance in relation to collective, societal politics, purposes and plans' (p. 58) is a vital part of the modern university's role. Unlike the principle of disinterest, this idea does have resonances with models of practitioner research generated in universities in recent times. For Filmer, it implies a refusal on the part of university researchers to be located as mere guns-for-hire, either by governments or by industry. The notion

of 'critical' has, however, been more prescribed in certain types of practitioner research, linked as it often is to the cause of redressing social injustice. According to Zeichner and Noffke, 'the idea that social research can be directly connected to social reconstruction has long been an important parallel to practitioner research' (2001, p. 300), and it is a 'parallel' they clearly endorse.

Social reconstructionism is a more 'left-leaning' version of 'critical' than Filmer would intend or advocate. It is a standpoint for critique that has found its way into certain programs of teacher professional development despite any necessary commitment to, or ringing endorsement of, an 'advocacy' politics on the part of participant teachers and school administrators. This is acknowledged by Zeichner and Noffke in their advocacy of 'bridg[ing] the current divide between academic discussions of critical and emancipatory goals for practitioner research and practitioners' discussions of the classroom as a site for political struggle' (2001, p. 324). Thus the 'critical' purposes of practitioner research can be a sticking point if and when 'good intentions' about empowerment of the oppressed appear to make overt political demands, including the demand that the classroom be viewed as 'a site for political struggle'.

Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988, pp. 22–3) socially critical model has made strong claims to be of this social reconstructionist type – 'bottom-up', change enhancing, collaborative and systematic – and emphatically for redressing social injustice. A product of critical sociological thinking at Deakin University, Australia, at the end of the 1980s, their action research spiral of planning, acting, observing and reflecting is still held by many to be a watershed in the development of practitioner research. Their model aims to include insiders, in that it starts 'small and local', engaging with local concerns and local individuals and groups, before moving on to more powerful questions that challenge the present activities and practices of the participants, including the language in which actions and ideas are justified or explained (pp. 24–5). All of the participants are understood as 'knowing subjects', socially constructed yet capable of acting and thinking otherwise. What remains significant about this model is that it attempts to grapple with issues of methodological validation at the same time that it seeks to pursue a politics of emancipation.

Unfortunately, action research in practice did not always prove to be as precise as Kemmis and McTaggart's 'compartmentalisation' of time or geometrical metaphors suggest. Put bluntly, Yeats's metaphor of the falcon in the widening gyre has seemed more appropriate than the metaphor of a neat investigative spiral (McWilliam 1994). This has led, in turn, to attempts to develop models to 'control' action research in order that the potential for chaos does not undermine the research intentions (see Avison, Baskerville and Myers 2001). Other 'dangers' have been identified in its use, not the least of which are concerns about the tension between 'the need to know'

and 'the need to protect' the knower, given the often sensitive, context-specific knowledge that is the object of inquiry (see Tickle 2001, McNamee 2001).

Of all the tensions that have emerged, however, the most significant has been arguably the special tensions for the researcher as both 'action research facilitator' *and* socially critical political actor. These tensions are flagged in John Elliot's description of the 'action research facilitator' over a decade ago:

> Unlike the critical theorist, the action research facilitator does not assume that dialogue between insiders produces a consensus as a basis for collective action ... he or she is tolerant of divergent outcomes of debate and the expression of individuality in decision-making. The facilitator also believes in the power of insiders to generate their own critiques of the ideological structures which distort their self-understandings. The task of facilitator is not to generate critical theories but to stimulate the process of reflection which will enable insiders to generate their own. (Elliot 1988, p. 165)

A difficulty for the 'socially critical' action researcher, then, is that once emancipation is declared in advance as the goal, and once emancipation is understood in terms of a particular theory or set of theories about political action, then 'divergent outcomes' will be highly problematic if and when they do not move in what is understood to be a 'progressive' direction.

In the third millennium, there has been a widespread tendency to supplant the word 'emancipation' with the arguably less militant term 'empowerment' (see, for example, Conway and Little 2001). 'Being empowered' is now a motivational mantra for corporate managers, tele-evangelists and minority activists alike. The current popularity of the term 'empowerment' within and across a wide range of public discourses has mean that it has now become an exhausted signifier within the discourse of 'research as praxis' (Lather 1986). Occupying the high moral ground in terms of the purpose of educational change, 'empowerment' heralds endless possibilities for agency at both the individual and community level, and yet it is increasingly devoid of meaning in terms of the *realpolitik* of professional work. Its evocation is commonplace in the 'change-enhancing' work of practitioner research as a 'redemptive project' (Popkewitz 1997), whether that project is understood to be about professional development or political struggle or both.

The trend to move 'practitioner research' beyond an earlier, more overtly political system of language has its parallels in critical teacher education scholarship. Where once teachers were understood to be part of an oppressive ideological state apparatus

(Althusser 1971, Bowles and Gintis 1976, Willis 1977), a post-welfare climate of under-funding for education and health has seen teachers redeemed as victims in the struggle against an unjust social and economic order (see Smyth 2001). This recent reputational rehabilitation of teachers in sociological writing is an important means by which new alliances can and have been forged between classroom teachers and academics, both of whom are pitted against a 'more for less' funding climate for education. Such alliances can work as a tactic for staving off external challenges that have been made to both groups (academics and teachers) in relation to educational standards and quality control.

There are echoes here of an earlier era in which action research was less than helpful in providing 'findings' that might be the basis on which governments or lobby groups might intervene in schooling practice. There is little doubt that action research waned in the 1960s and 70s as much for what it did *not* contribute to the more dubious aims of educational standardisation and quality control as for inherent epistemological or methodological weaknesses (McTaggart 1991, Apple 1984). This manifested itself in suspicion of any researcher who sought social change as insufficiently *disinterested* to be trusted to do valid research (Corey 1982, p. 54). Yet, perhaps paradoxically, local, praxis-oriented inquiry has become increasingly attractive to the state (oppressive or otherwise) as a tactic to be employed in the governance of educators and their work. In bringing practitioner research and teacher professional development together, many employing bodies, whether intentionally or not, have been able to recuperate the overtly political agendas of 'socially critical' academics, by depicting 'progressive' teachers as smart leaders and managers rather than leftist radicals (see McConnell 2002, Potter 2001). As leaders and managers, teachers have been called upon to inquire into and reflect upon their own practice, either as part of a formal process of credentialing, and/or the professional purposes of evaluating their own performance in the light of 'best practice' (see, for example, Burke 1997). This discursive shift, occurring as it has in more recent 'corporatising' times (McWilliam 2000), also has its attractions for a profession with concerns about its own (lack of) status.

## Where to now?

One option for moving forward is to name the 'leadership and management' agenda as de-limited by its a-politicism, and then use practitioner research as a means to colonise that space for more 'progressive ends' than 'professional development' as a technical and/or corporatising endeavour. Moves have already been made in this direction, as evidenced by the tenor of a number of articles that have appeared in the relatively new *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. While the imperative to 'save' teachers from professional development should be viewed with caution,

there is certainly good reason to challenge, as Mark Hobart (1993) and others do, some of the key characteristics of developmental knowledge as an epistemology. These include: the idea that developmental knowledge is rational, scientific knowledge rather than local, folkloric or spiritual knowledge (p. 2); the fact that developmental knowledge is 'couched predominantly in the idiom of economics, technology and management' (p. 2); and the fact that the preferred theoretical models are those that are 'generalisable or appear to offer the greatest predictability or the semblance of control over events' (p. 9), so that implementation can 'work within pre-established guidelines and assume that particular conditions fit a general mould' (p. 9). (See also McWilliam 2002.)

Unfortunately, the temptation to which many academics succumb in this ideological wrestling match is to substitute their own preferred forms of theoretical or disciplinary knowledge in ways that can be no less problematic for teacher-researchers who are seeking to 'develop themselves' through research. While there is no safe space from which to pontificate about a 'pure' way to proceed (politically or methodologically), we should know as academics that we do not have a monopoly on knowledge production, including knowledge production about what ought to count as valid inquiry into practice.

A hallmark of much educational research, particularly as it applies to graduate studies of the sort that practising teachers and administrators might undertake, is still the presumption that researchers ought to opt for one model (i.e. action research *or* discourse analysis *or* case study *or* ethnography) and then disregard any possibilities that might exist outside it when exploring the 'so what' question that always arises in educational work. While we have been witnessing for over a decade a fragmentation and dispersion of research methodology and its epistemological foundations (Hamilton and McWilliam 2001, Lather 1991), there are still only tentative signs of a movement to take advantage of the way contemporary debates might generate more innovations in the design of individual studies as performances of research. Put another way, the tendency has been for method to congeal into formulae, and this is a state of affairs in which both academics and credential-seeking professionals are complicit. Just as a time-poor client with large professional responsibilities is unlikely to be interested in spending vast amounts of time theorising method or investing in a 'one-off' design, so too an academic who is highly skilled in one disciplinary area is unlikely to voluntarily deride the knowledge basis of that very skill. Thus the overwhelming tendency remains that of working backwards from a method ('I'm going to do a case study on something') to a do-able problem as defined by that method.

While this is understandable as a tactic for efficient completion (it keeps the academic's privilege in place while getting the student researcher moving), it nevertheless hijacks

the original problem of practice, so that all the messiness and unresolvability of the daily work under question is expunged in the service of making practice amenable to inquiry. Thus the researcher of professional practice comes to understand that, while the problem to be settled on might not be the most pressing – or indeed, even very familiar as a problem at all – it is nevertheless the one whose active and timely pursuit will lead to a credential.

While overturning this state of affairs was the very rationale on which much practitioner research has been based, its very legitimation as 'a method' has been its undoing in a number of respects. Its framing as an alternative in a suite of possible methods can be a tyranny for graduate students, who come to understand that each method has its own set of relevant techniques, but that finally they need to choose one. Where practitioner research (as action research or local inquiry or self-study) is framed as occupying the 'flabby end' of a quantitative–qualitative continuum, it may be taken up 'by default' by mid-career graduate 'returnees' to the university who may well be overawed by jargon and too much choice. In this sense, practitioner research may be understood to have something in common with genealogy, inasmuch as genealogy is also a non-traditional research method that is an increasingly popular methodology in the social sciences, often misunderstood, sometimes misrepresented, and still to achieve broad acceptance (Meadmore, Hatcher and McWilliam 2000).

The 'disinterested-versus-interested' debate will not go away – it is a condition in which the work will have to be done anyway. So the challenge is to move closer to the 'action' by considering how practitioner research is being taught as a 'legitimate' research method in education, and what the significance of this is for its future. A central consideration here is how two propositions about the nature of practitioner knowledge can be accommodated within the one design. These are, metaphorically, that 'whoever discovered water, we can be sure it wasn't the fish', and that 'nobody knows the water like the fish'. By implication, there is a need to provide practitioners with a means of discovering their situation anew while at the same time valuing the tacit knowing that is produced out of their embeddedness in practice.

This suggests the sort of 'double move' that Patti Lather (1997) writes about in her analysis of the means by which it might be possible to trace researcher complicity at the same time as pursuing 'interested' research. The 'double move' is a strategy that points us to design, not method. It makes trouble for method as any one set of techniques (e.g. 'plan, act, observe, reflect') because they will not be sufficient for the epistemological demands of such inquiry. Design infers a greater client focus than method, driven as it is by the demands and needs of end-users and constraints of time, place and funding. What is becoming clearer is that rigorously conceived practitioner research, far from being at the flabby end of research methodology, might have the

capacity to talk back to the academy as an imperative *against* method, where method cannot imagine both disinterestedness and interestedness within the one study, and this is true of most 'method' courses at graduate level. In doing so, practitioner research might pre-empt a mode of inquiry that is portfolio-like both in its hybridity and in its ability to retain coherence while paying attention to very different domains of ideas and practices at different moments within the study. This is not to bypass technique but to understand its importance in a larger scheme of thinking and to insist that, where certain techniques are needed (e.g. scenario planning, focus group interviews) they are done with meticulous attention to required protocols. The idea that practitioner researchers' tacit professional knowledge ought to be considered sufficient for the purposes of inquiry – and thus that all practitioners need is 'permission' to follow their instincts – has done a great disservice to practitioner research, laudable as its motives might have been in seeking parity of esteem for those 'outside' the academy.

It is useful at this point to consider what genealogy could offer to this imperative in practitioner research. As methods, both genealogy and practitioner research are inherently unfinished and unfinishable as individual studies. Both are also focused on problems of the present. A key distinguishing feature, however, is that the tendency in practitioner research is to move towards improving conditions of practice, while genealogy is more focused on how we come to think of a particular 'problem' and its 'solution'. According to Meredyth and Tyler, genealogy takes as its starting point 'questions posed in the present, investigating the terms in which those problems are currently understood, and tracing the line of descent that has led to problems being posed in these ways' (1993, p. 4). The focus is on 'new truth games, new ways of objectifying and speaking the truth about ourselves, and new ways in which we are able to be and required to be subjects in relation to new practices of government' (Burchell 1993, p. 277).

While tracking a particular domain of practice as a line of (discursive) descent may seem to be taking researchers away from the reality – the sound, smell and taste – of the present problem, it could also be argued that this tactic could assist 'self-study' researchers to create the sort of 'disinterested' epistemological conditions under which they might be able to surprise themselves in a landscape of practice with which many are very familiar indeed. The move to render this landscape unfamiliar is crucial to any possibility of finding otherwise in the research act itself. Three gains are made possible here: it is not only that the researcher might actually find out something that they did not already know or suspect about their practice; it is also that research might be less boring than it is currently for those who know what it is they are going to find and find it. A third gain may well be that the rush to 'save' others might be tempered by the potential here to see well-intentioned 'solutions' or formulae for 'best

practice' in terms of their potential tyranny for others. 'Disinterest' could thus be built in as a temporary brake on advocacy through tacit knowing as the *only* knowing, rather than as a move away from 'interested' research entirely.

While I am not suggesting that genealogy and practitioner research are synonymous modes of inquiry, the argument here is that the historicising work of genealogy is highly relevant to practitioners who want to know how a particular problem of practice might have been *thought differently* in other times and places. In doing so, practitioners can make the very terms of their inquiry an issue for their practice, in much the same way as the significance of a shift from 'emancipation' to 'empowerment' was interrogated above. Genealogical or historicising work could thus be one tactic in a larger set of strategies that come together in a genuinely problem-focused design. So the question 'How might middle schooling optimise the education of boys in my own time and place?' is approached through antecedents, namely, 'Why middle schooling now?'; 'Why boys now?'; 'What counts/has counted as good education for boys in other less familiar times and places?'; 'Does this count now and if not, how not?' – 'how not', as distinct from 'why not', because the latter frame is likely to take us back into a more predictable 'causality' which is a re-familiarising rather than a de-familiarising move.

## Conclusion

The point of this paper has been both to question and promote practitioner research – to point to its strengths and limitations in order to move on to imagine what a new generation of practitioner research might look like. There is much more to be done to flesh out particular strategies in a 'disinterested–interested' mode of inquiry, one that has particular relevance for graduate students who are engaged in, and committed to, professional practice in education. While some possible links have been flagged between practitioner research and genealogy, this has been provided as one example rather than a formula. The broad challenge of this paper has been to contribute to new debates about the value and operationalising of practitioner research among educators. What is at stake is the very credibility of a large component of educational research within the broad community, in particular the component that is produced by teachers and administrators for teachers and administrators as graduate researchers. To fail to attend to this issue is to encourage educators to engage in research that is too easily dismissed or ignored, as it has been, and in some cases with good reason. We can do better.

## References

Althusser, L. (1971) *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, B. Brewster, trans., Monthly Review Press, New York.

Anderson , G.L. & Herr, K. (1999) The new paradigm wars: Is there room for rigorous practitioner knowledge in schools and universities? *Educational Researcher,* 28 (5), pp.12-21+40.

Apple, M. (1984) The political economy of text publishing, *Educational Theory*, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 307–19.

Avison, D., R. Baskerville and M. Myers (2001) Controlling action research projects, *Information Technology and People*, vol. 14, no. 1, p. 28.

Bowles, S. and H. Gintis (1976) *Schooling in Capitalist America*, Basic Books, New York.

Bruck, D., R. Hallett, B. Hood, I. MacDonald and S. Moore (2001) Enhancing student satisfaction in higher education: the creation of staff teaching communities, *Australian Educational Researcher*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 79–97.

Buckingham, B. (1926) *Research for Teachers*. New York: Silver, Burdett.

Burchell, G. (1993) Liberal government and techniques of the self, *Economy and Society*, 22 (3), 267-282.

Burke, K. (1997) *Designing Professional Portfolios for Change*, Hawker Brownlow, Australia.

Carr, W. and S. Kemmis (1986) *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research*, Falmer Press, London.

Conway, J. and P. Little (2001) Problem-based learning: a strategy or entrapment, enslavement or empowerment? In P. Little, T. O. Seng, P. Kandlbinder, A. Williams, K. Clearly and J. Conway, eds., *Proceedings of the 3rd Asia-Pacific Conference on Problem-Based Learning: Experience, Empowerment and Evidence*, Australian Problem-Based Network, Callaghan, NSW.

Corey, S. (1953) *Action Research to Improve School Practices*, Teachers College Press, New York.

Corey, S. (1982) Action research, fundamental research and educational practices, in Action Research in Curriculum Course Team (S. Kemmis, chair), *The Action Research Reader*, 2nd ed., Deakin University Press, Geelong.

Elliot, J. (1988) Educational research and outsider–insider relations, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 54–62.

Filmer, P. (1997) Disinterestedness and the modern university, in A. Smith and F. Webster, eds., *The Postmodern University: Contested Visions of Higher Education*, Open University Press, Philadelphia.

Gadamer, H. (1975) *Truth and Method*. Translated and edited by G.Bardena and J.Cumming. New York: Seabury Press.

Hamilton, D. and E. McWilliam (2002) Ex-centric voices that frame research on teaching, in V. Richardson, ed., *Handbook for Research on Teaching*, 4th ed., American Educational Research Association, Washington.

Hitchcock, G. and D. Hughes (1995) *Research and the Classroom Teacher*, Routledge, London.

Hobart, M. (1993) (Ed.) An Anthropological Critique of Development: The growth of ignorance. London: Routledge.

Hodgkinson, J. (1957) Action research: a critique, *Journal of Educational Sociology*, vol. 31, no. 4, pp. 137–53.

Kemmis, S. and R. McTaggart (1988) *The Action Research Planner*, 3rd ed., Deakin University Press, Geelong.

Lather, P. (1986) Research as praxis, *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 56, no. 3, pp. 257–77.

Lather, P. (1991) *Feminist Research in Education: Within/Against*, Deakin University Press, Geelong.

Lewin, K. (1946) Action research and minority problems, *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 2, pp. 34–46.

McAllister, M. and L. Stockhausen (2001) Using action research within a school of nursing: exposing tensions in ideologies, *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 15–22.

McConnell, D. (2002) Action research and distributed problem-based learning in continuing professional education, *Distance Education*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 59–83.

McNamee, M. (2001) The guilt of whistle-blowing: conflicts in action research and educational ethnography, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 423–42.

McTaggart, R. (1991) *Action Research: A Short Modern History*, Deakin University Press, Geelong.

McWilliam E. (1994) *In Broken Images: Feminist Tales for a Different Teacher Education*, Teachers College Press, New York.

McWilliam, E. (1999) *Pedagogical Pleasures*, Peter Lang Publishing, New York.

McWilliam, E. (2000) The perfect corporate fit: new knowledge for new times, *International Journal of Leadership in Education: Theory and Practice*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 75–83.

McWilliam, E. (2002) Against professional development, *Educational Philosophy and Theory,* vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 289–300.

Meadmore, D., Hatcher, C. and McWilliam, E. (2000) Getting Tense about Genealogy, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13 (5), 463-476.

Meredyth, D. and Tyler, D. (1993) *Child and Citizen: Genealogies of Schooling and Subjectivity*, Brisbane: Griffith University.

Popkewitz, T. (1997) Educational sciences and the normalisations of the teacher and the child: some historical notes on current USA pedagogical reforms, in I. Nilsson and L. Lundahl, eds., *Teachers, Curriculum and Policy*, Umea University, Sweden.

Potter, G. (2001) The power of collaborative research in teachers' professional development, *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 8–13.

Sankaran, S., B. Dick, R. Passfield, P. Swepson, eds., (2001) *Effective Change Management using Action Learning and Action Research: Concepts, Frameworks, Processes, Applications*, Southern Cross University Press, Lismore, Australia.

Smyth, J. (2001) *Critical Politics of Teachers' Work: An Australian Perspective*, Peter Lang Publishing, New York.

Tickle, L. (2001) Opening windows, closing doors: ethical dilemmas in educational action research, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 345–60.

Untersteiner, M. (1954) *The Sophists*, K. Freeman, trans., Basil Blackwell, Oxford.

Wallace, M. (1987) A historical review of action research: some implications for the education of teachers in their managerial role, *Journal of Education for Teaching*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 97–115.

Willis, P. E. (1977) *Learning to Labour: How Working-Class Kids get Working-Class Jobs*, Saxon House, Westmead, Farnborough, Hants.

Zeichner, K. M. and S. E. Noffke (2001) Practitioner research, in V. Richardson, ed., *The Handbook for Research on Teaching*, 4th ed., American Educational Research Association, Washington.